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# Celebrating Report

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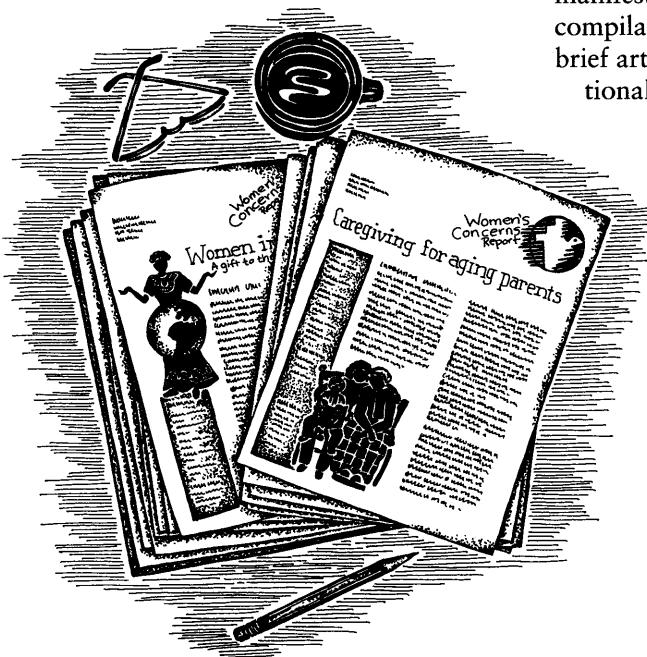
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## CO-COMPILER'S COMMENTS

For over a year and a half now, we have been discussing the future of *Women's Concerns Report*. We have mulled over the options and consequences, looked at the reality of dwindling subscriptions, and have finally come to a decision to discontinue publishing *Report*. This was a very difficult decision to make; many people were consulted, and many, many discussions took place. The reality is that much of the Women's Concerns Desk budget goes towards the publication of *Report* and it is only reaching about 500 readers (that doesn't take into account people picking it up in their church library or readers passing issues on to

their friends)—the majority of whom have been loyal and faithful readers over the years. While spending this money on *Report* is not necessarily a bad thing, we at the Women's Concerns Desk need to look for new ways to reach broader constituencies; and one way we can do this is to use the money that we had been using to publish *Report* to fund new projects and initiatives.

As I looked back over the past 30 years of *Report* in preparation for this issue, it was amazing to see how much the *Report* has changed over the years. It began as six stapled pages of short, typed articles; and through the years morphed to its current manifestation of a 16 to 20 page topical compilation. Articles changed from short, brief articles with quite a few informational snippets under "News and Verbs" and many letters to the editor; to longer articles (often printed anonymously) with a number of poems, letters to the editor, and "News and Verbs" entries; to a newsletter with long articles and a few entries under "News and Verbs" and "Across the Globe." The layout has changed drastically from what could almost be called an unattractive, roughly typed, photocopied newsletter (at least in



Patricia Haverstick completed her term as Women's Concerns Editor in October. She and her husband Kreg Weaver welcomed their first child into the world in September. They are enjoying getting to know Ellen. Trish and Kreg live in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, and are currently looking for a new church family.

**It is with much trepidation and excitement that we enter this new phase for the Women's Concerns Desk. We are losing a lot—a wonderful publication that has done a good job of telling women's stories and discussing gender issues over the years. But we are also excited about the possibility of going in new directions and beginning new projects.**

terms of 2004 standards of printing and design) to a professionally designed and printed publication (not quite a magazine, not quite a newsletter) with beautiful illustrations.

Certain themes emerged as I read through the past issues—things like violence against women, gender roles, family situations, women in ministry, and spirituality and theology. In this issue of *Report*, I will be highlighting articles from the past 30 years that focus on these topics. On the topic of violence against women, I have included Carolyn Holderread Heggen's suggestions for churches; Elsie Neufeld's story of professional abuse; Tatjana Alvadj's description of the cause of rape, particularly in the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina; and Clarice Kratz's sermon that calls on the church to work more deliberately on the issue of family abuse. The topic of gender roles is intertwined with so many other topics, and often times, were discussed in terms of relationships with spouses and/or within the immediate family. The article "Sex roles and injustice in the home" is one such article. Bernie Wiebe also reports on a conference called "New Men/New Roles." On the issue of family situations, Mary Alice Ressler writes about raising feminist sons and Margaret Hunsberger writes about the paradoxes of single life. Women in ministry is another topic that appears quite often; here, Ruth Brunk Stoltzfus shares a poem for women who want to be

pastors, Wilma Bailey shares some stories from the Bible that demonstrate that women have had a prophetic voice throughout history, and Paul Shaheen shares his sense of loss over the lack of a feminine presence in church leadership.

Finally, spirituality and theology have been prevalent topics of *Report*. I have included articles by Maribel Ramírez (now Ramírez Hinojosa) and Lydia Harder. Maribel shares why it is important to her and her Sunday school students to study the Bible in their first language, Spanish; and Lydia reflects on the images we use to understand God. I almost feel as if I need to apologize that two of the articles being reprinted are written by men. However, all of these topics are issues that men and women need to work on together, so I find men's stories and experiences to be a welcome addition.

Also featured in this issue of *Report* is a vision for the future of Women's Concerns in both MCC Canada and MCC U.S. Linda Gehman Peachey, the director of the MCC U.S. Women's Concerns Desk, writes about the exciting possibilities for new programming, while Lois Coleman Neufeld, the director of Canadian Programs for MCC Canada, writes about how the Women's Concerns agenda is being addressed in MCC Canada. I've also included a complete list of *Women's Concerns Report* issues.

As was alluded to in the March–April 2004 issue of *Report*, MCC U.S. Peace and Justice Ministries is in the planning stages of developing a new peace-and-justice publication. This publication will focus on the interconnections that exist between the many different social issues addressed by MCC U.S. Peace and Justice Ministries. The Women's Concerns Desk is also exploring having additional resources and/or articles available on our Web site that relate to the topic(s) addressed in each issue. We are excited about these new possibilities but recognize that it will take several more months before they are available.

**The MCC Committees on Women's Concerns believe that all women and men are made in God's image and called to do God's work. We strive to work for the dignity and self-development of Mennonite, Brethren-in-Christ and Mennonite Brethren women, and to encourage wholeness and mutuality in relationships between women and men.**

**Articles and views presented in *Women's Concerns Report* do not necessarily reflect the views of the Committees on Women's Concerns or Mennonite Central Committee. The articles published should not be perceived as position statements of MCC, MCC U.S. or MCC Canada.**

**WOMEN'S CONCERN REPORT is edited by Patricia Haverstick. Layout is by Beth Oberholtzer Design, Lancaster, Pa. Illustrations are drawn by Teresa Pankratz, Chicago, Ill. Do not reproduce without permission.**

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**This newsletter is printed on recycled paper.**

It is with much trepidation *and* excitement that we enter this new phase for the Women's Concerns Desk. We are losing a lot—a wonderful publication that has done a good job of telling women's stories and discussing gender issues over the years. But we are also excited about the possibility of going in new directions and beginning new projects. So, I hope you enjoy the collection of articles we have put together, and feel free to contact us with your dreams and fears about the direction we are taking.

—co-compiled by Patricia J. Haverstick, Editor

## Editor's note

I want to thank Linda Gehman Peachey, the MCC U.S. Women's Concerns Director, for her assistance with this issue of *Women's Concerns Report*. She truly co-compiled and co-edited this issue with me.

—Patricia Haverstick

## From the desk

•**Your Subscription.** You should have received a letter asking you to choose how to handle the remainder of your subscription to *Report*. Briefly, there are three options: designate this amount as a contribution, apply this to a subscription for the new publication, or receive a refund. If you have not already responded, please contact Linda Gehman Peachey at [lgp@mcc.org](mailto:lgp@mcc.org), (888) 563-4676 in the U.S. or (717) 859-1151.

•**Scarves for sale.** At the Gifts of the Red Tent conference, red handcrafted silk scarves were sold. The scarves were made by Madhya Kalikata Shilpangan (MKS), a women's co-operative from Calcutta, India. MKS partners with Ten Thousand Villages. The logo was created by Teresa Pankratz (from Chicago, Illinois, and the illustrator of the *Women's Concerns Report*) and the scarf was designed by Mary Lou Weaver Houser (an artist from Lancaster, Pennsylvania). We still have a number of the square scarves (35" x 35") available. You can purchase the scarf for \$20 (U.S.) plus \$3 (U.S.) shipping. Please contact Linda Gehman Peachey, MCC U.S. Women's Concerns, at 717-859-1151 or [lgp@mcc.org](mailto:lgp@mcc.org).

## Correction

In the September–October, 2004 issue, there was an error in Diane Zaerr Brenneman's article, "Pastor shortage?" The correct statistics are: in Mennonite Church USA, 16% of pastors are women, and in Mennonite Church Canada, 20% of pastors are women.♦

# Vision for the future in MCC U.S.

For me, endings are always difficult. It is hard to part with things that have been important in my life. It is almost as if I am giving up a part of myself. And so I tend to hold onto things, thinking I may need them some day or fearing I may lose the memories and meaning they evoke.

It feels very sad, therefore, to think of ending the publication of *Women's Concerns Report*. For this newsletter has played an important role in the lives of so many people, especially women. Over the years, its regular structure and discipline documented our voices on a host of issues. It gave us—as women—a place to explore our questions and concerns, and helped us articulate and express our experience within the church and world.

Yet, times have changed. The number of subscribers to *Report* has been steadily dropping, and we have had to ponder what this means. Today, in some places, women do experience more opportunities and support, so this forum may be less

necessary than it was formerly. For others, a written format may not be the best way to discuss their concerns. We are also leading busier lives, constantly inundated with information. How then can we best continue the conversation? And how can we more adequately include others? What might be possible if the staff time and budget money, now spent on *Report*, were available for other projects?

As was already mentioned, one possibility is a joint peace-and-justice publication that will more deliberately focus on the intersection between sexism, racism, violence, immigration issues and economic injustice. Although less focused exclusively on women's experiences, we hope its holistic framework can provide fresh perspectives for our journey. For we cannot separate our experience as women from these other factors. We are not women only, but women from within a particular history, ethnic group, economic class and nation. These dynamics also greatly influ-

by Linda Gehman Peachey

Linda Gehman Peachey is the director of the MCC U.S. Women's Concerns program. She and her husband, Titus, live in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, and attend East Chestnut Street Mennonite Church. With daughters Beth and Rachel both in college this year, they are newly adjusting to life in an "empty nest." Linda especially enjoys reading, hiking and visiting with family and friends.



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Other projects and opportunities include:

- providing additional stories and resources on the MCC Web site, publishing books for use by Sunday school classes and small groups, and creating drama or documentaries that communicate women's experience and wisdom.
- hosting gatherings of African-American, Latina, Asian and Native-American women theologians and church leaders to explore their particular history, experiences and perspectives.
- organizing forums or other ways to discuss biblical and theological issues of particular concern to women, such as our understanding of difficult biblical texts, power, violence, salvation, atonement, leadership and the nature of God's love and justice.
- writing more articles in denominational publications on the above issues, as well as highlighting stories of women in the early church, the Anabaptist movement and today.
- continuing to address *sexism* or the ways in which our society and its institutions continue to degrade and dehumanize women.
- continuing to address *internalized sexism* or the ways in which women learn

to believe the negative messages we are taught.

- continuing to address issues of child abuse, domestic violence and professional misconduct, especially in communities where these concerns have received less attention.
- hosting local gatherings of women across racial, ethnic and class lines for mutual enrichment, encouragement and action.

These are some of the ideas that we are exploring. Perhaps you have additional ideas or suggestions. We do welcome your input and would love to hear from you.

Interestingly, most of these proposals still fit within the goals stated in the very first issue of *Report*, published in August 1973. At that time, the Peace Section Task Force on Women in Church and Society hoped to: "1) provide a forum for sharing concerns, ideas and resource materials . . . 2) make visible and affirm efforts being made by women to create a more whole, inclusive church and society; and 3) alert women to available leadership positions." Today, such efforts are still important. Although the methods and format may change, our vision remains the same. We believe in the reign of God becoming real on earth, a realm in which women and men worship and serve God together, with mutuality and grace. ♦

# Carrying the Women's Concerns agenda in Canada

by Lois Coleman Neufeld

For many women, the presence of a Women's Concerns program at MCC Canada for the last 20 years has been an encouragement and a sign that the church is engaged and interested in the issues women face in our society. It has been a place where Mennonite/Brethren in Christ women have felt safe and understood. The program has addressed many important issues over the years, including

domestic violence, sexual abuse, and the role of women in the church. A quick look at our society and churches reveals that these challenges still exist in many places, and that progress towards respect and mutuality is slow.

Over the years, it became common for people to assume that Women's Concerns coordinators were carrying the women's

agenda, both within the MCC organization and the constituent churches. This implied that other people did not need to concern themselves with issues of injustice against women, because someone else was looking after it. The result has been the tendency to isolate the discussion into a corner of the program department, and resist efforts to bring the discussion to other forums.

With these realities, it has been important for the MCCs in Canada to find ways to keep the agenda a priority and, where possible, to give wings to it, and find new energy for it.

Provincial offices continue to lead much of MCC's work on domestic violence and sexual abuse. During the last two years, provincial staff have collaborated to develop an excellent Web site, provide an annual worship resource, and respond in many practical ways to issues of abuse in their communities. MCCC plays a coordinating and resourcing role, supporting staff and programs wherever possible.

Also significant to the discussion is the emerging 'inclusion' movement. The MCCs in Canada have agreed that as our work against racism and ethnocentrism gains prominence, this should not be at the expense of the work against sexism. As a result, all provincial offices are in the process of, or have already named, inclusion teams. These are groups of people coming from all sectors of MCC to work at issues of racism, gender, and ethnocentrism. Some provinces are broadening their mandate to include ageism, ableism, and perhaps other 'isms'.

In addition to the inclusion teams, many provinces are beginning to encourage all programs to integrate issues of gender, race and ethnicity in their work. As an example, questions being asked around gender include: are the needs of women being addressed or ignored, are women being included or excluded in the decision making process, how are women and men invited to participate in discussions, who has access to the distribution of resources, how are women and men being portrayed in our media? Answering these and other

questions pushes everybody to examine the role of women and men in their programs and departments and to work towards a more balanced approach. The same kinds of questions are being developed around race and ethnicity.

As we continue to work for respect and equal access to resources and power, it is important that there be safe places to explore ideas and find encouragement. In MCC Canada, it is our goal to broaden the forum where discussions can take place in ways that are respectful and inclusive. We also want to take advantage of opportunities to connect with other ecumenical groups working on common agenda, so that through conscious efforts we might all be encouraged to contribute to God's work in the world. ♦

Lois Coleman Neufeld works for MCC Canada as Director of Canadian Programs. She and her husband Rob have spent most of their adult lives in Africa along with their two children, Karin and John. They are now settled in Winnipeg where Lois enjoys weekly meals with several other households in her community, lots of sunshine and cold weather, books, chocolate and an annual canoe trip with 6 other women.

**In MCC Canada, it is our goal to broaden the forum where discussions can take place in ways that are respectful and inclusive.**

## **Eight ways the church can reflect the Holy Spirit to abused members**

by Carolyn Holderread Heggen

- 1. Make it known that all persons, the young and the old, the healthy and those with handicaps, males and females, are of equal value in God's eyes, that all reflect God's divine image.**
- 2. Teach members, from the youngest to the oldest, that it is never appropriate to use violence to impose the will of one person on another.**
- 3. Communicate that what happens among member families is a church matter. As the apostle Paul said, we are all members of the same body, and if one part of the body suffers, so does the whole body.**
- 4. Dedicate more resources to building healthy families in such ways as premarital counseling. Emphasize that sexual abuse and interpersonal violence are prohibited and that, should abuse occur, the church will support the victim and help the abuser find ways to change unacceptable behavior.**
- 5. Listen to victims' stories.**
- 6. Take into account that there are likely victims and abusers in the congregation when planning worship. In devotions and sermons, church leaders and members can pray for safety for victims and for spiritual resources to enable abusers to change.**
- 7. Examine any teachings that could contribute to interpersonal violence. If teachings aren't good news for the weakest and most vulnerable, they don't reflect our Lord's message and should be rejected.**
- 8. Commit to walking in love with suffering members. This walk can include both emotional and practical support, such as childcare or meals when a victim is depressed due to memories of childhood abuse.**

This list first appeared in the September–October 2001 issue, *Report #157, "Domestic violence: A concern for all."*

# Recovering from soul rape

by Elsie K. Neufeld

This article is adapted from an article that first appeared in the January–February 1994 issue, *Report* #112, "Pastoral and professional misconduct: An abuse of power."

**Recovery is an over and over again journey. Often messy. With a beginning and a middle, but not, I think, an end. We, all of us, are constantly in recovery.**

**I**t's been 330 days since I disclosed my dark secret; I was victimized by a "man of God," an ordained minister and college professor. I will call him Cain. Cain called me "friend," his "special friend," the one he'd searched for all his life. I was unspeakably flattered to be his "chosen." At his suggestion, we made a life-long "friendship covenant."

Very quickly—too quickly—he became my mentor, counselor, literary agent and, in his words, "supporting cast." And I? Cain said I was his "grace-giver," "wounded healer," "true friend," and "Christ."

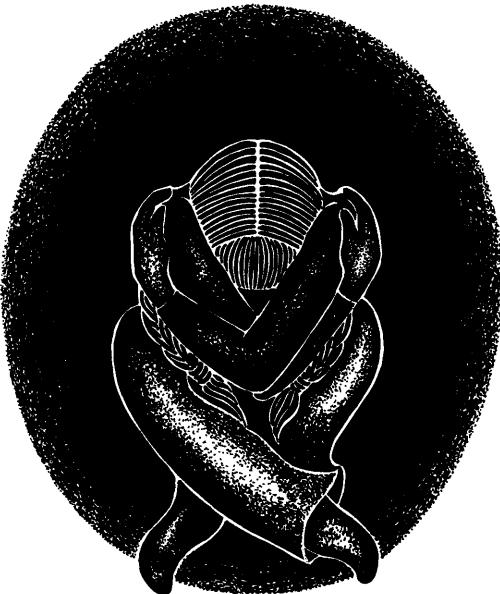
Cain said he hoped he wasn't crowding me. He also said he couldn't live without me, and that, once in, there was no way out of the friendship. After the sexual violations; no, not only after—before and during, too—he often alluded to suicide. "Suicide threats should be taken seriously, especially if the person has a plan." Yes, Cain was specific: the bridge, the rafters in his bedroom, a knife . . .

And so, I didn't tell. I swore on my life: "I will *never* tell." And I didn't, not at first. After the "inappropriateness" stopped and I went on antidepressants, the dark memories got lost in the fog. We became friends, best friends. Until 18 months later, when I reduced the dosage. That's when the light began to crack the darkness. And then, three and a half years after we'd first begun relating, I told.

People ask: "Wasn't there someone you could have told?" "Why didn't you just say no?" "Why did you stay?" and the worst, "You went back after he sexually violated you?!" At first I tried to answer. But every explanation sounded stupid.

Telling made it worse! I never knew that dark could be so dark. "Disclosure shock," that's what telling brought me. Several weeks later, I overdosed. "When you swore on your life not to tell, you put a curse on yourself," is how a psychiatrist explained my act.

Relief was not immediate. How casually we quote Christ's words, "The truth shall set you free." Yet how terribly agonizing the reality! Truth hurts! Light blinds! The road to freedom, steep and wearing. And costly! Recovery is an over and over again journey. Often messy. With a beginning and a middle, but not, I think, an end. We, all of us, are constantly in recovery. From birth we plod along, trying to recover who we are, who we were meant to be. Exiled people, Eden-bent, bound by earthliness, by our humanity. Yet accompanied—assisted—by God. And that makes all the difference. Suddenly, difficulties become adventures. There is choice! ♦



# Culture and rape: Reflections on Bosnia

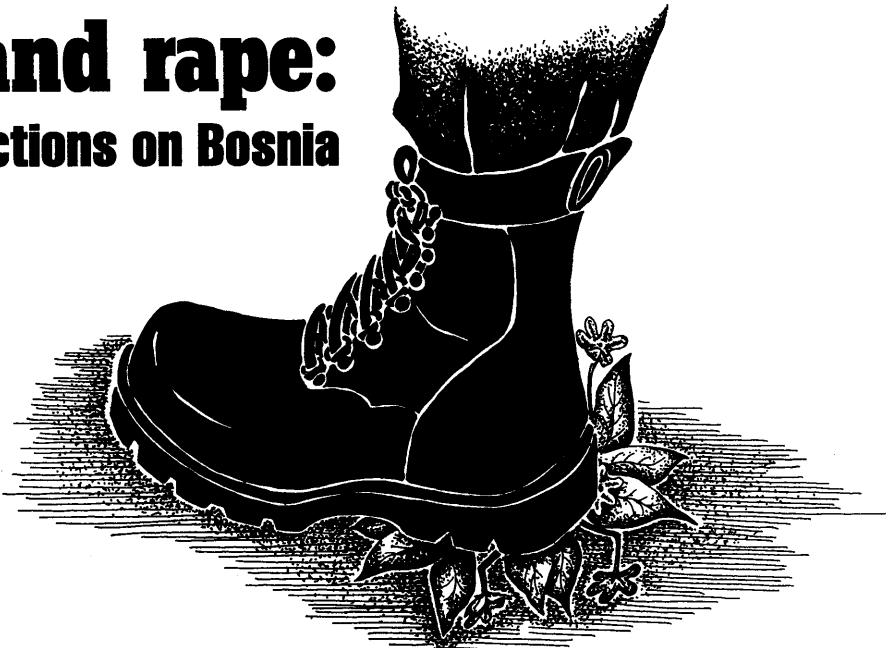
The rapes of Bosnian women—the vast majority among them Bosnian Muslims—were conducted in specially organized brothels and rape camps. The rapes often occurred in the presence of other men, sometimes the family members of the victims. Patriotic songs and vulgar words directed at the victims accompanied the acts. Raped women were bitten and starved to death. Sometimes, the rapes were even filmed and later used for propaganda.

What makes these acts appear more brutal is that these soldiers were very often neighbors, schoolmates, colleagues, and countrymen of the victims. Therefore, the questions arise but remain unanswered. How could that possibly happen? How could the transformation from a woman next door into a faceless object of “sexualized ethnic hatred” and violent outrage occur in such a short period of time?

## Background

Looking for a good place to start searching for the motives of these atrocities, one may glimpse into the cultural background of former Yugoslav society before the war, when everything seemed to be fine and peaceful. That society was patriarchal and misogynic like many others in the world.

In the Serbo-Croatian language (now existing as Serbian, Croatian, and Bosnian), the word “homeland” (*domovina, otadžbina*) has female grammatical gender. It does in other languages as well, such as Latin *patria*, Polish *ojczyzna*, and French *patrie*. Very often the word “homeland” was equalized with the word “mother” (motherland) as a personification of a nation’s most precious, ideal, vulnerable, and fertile being. Consequently, protecting the country means protecting our mothers (sisters, daughters) from the enemy, and invading the enemy’s country means assaulting their mothers (sisters, daughters).



The literature of former Yugoslavia was highly praised and taught in Yugoslav schools. In that literature, female characters exist either as ideal, asexual, bodiless beings (again, very often materialized in creatures of mother, sister, or daughter) or as amoral, restless, and sexually unsatisfied women who, at the end of the day, are always cruelly punished for their socially unacceptable behavior. There are many parallels of this pattern in European literature of the 19th and 20th centuries.

If we delve deep into every day life, we can find similar but more blatant stereotypes in rock music (“stay the trash till the end” sang a rock musician about a girl-friend), and, especially, in very popular contemporary folk music. The lyrics of these songs are full of disloyal women who deceive decent, honest and scrupulous men. The men, drowning their despair in alcohol, cry out for their (ideal, sinless) mother (“O, mother, mother, why did you give me a birth when I am so unhappy . . .”) and promise vengeance on the unfaithful girl. When Borislav Herak, a Serbian soldier who raped and killed three Muslim girls, was asked by the *Dallas Morning News* what he and his fellow soldiers did after committing these horrible deeds, he said that they went back to the car and turned on “Serbian folk music. The usual folk music.” That music—pathetic, vulgar, and straight misogynic—

by Tatjana Alvadj

This article is adapted from an article that first appeared in the May-June 2001 issue, *Report #155, “Women, war, and rape.”* It refers to the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina between 1992 and 1995.

**The reasons for the rapes that occurred in Bosnia in the early 1990s are many and varied. It is important to understand that such a massive and deliberate campaign of violence against women does not happen from nothing.**

gave them comfort and justification for their deeds, and thereby washed the blood from their hands: "The girls deserved it!"

## Conclusion

The reasons for the rapes that occurred in Bosnia in the early 1990s are many and

varied. It is important to understand that such a massive and deliberate campaign of violence against women does not happen from nothing. Rather, a pre-war culture full of symbolic images of hatred towards women created a climate in which wartime rape of women could happen in the way that it did. ♦

# In search of shalom

by Clarice Kratz

This article is adapted from an article that first appeared in the March–April 1989 issue, *Report* #83, "Incest."

**G**od, in our time, has "seen the affliction of people and heard their cry because of their taskmasters; God knows their sufferings and has come down to deliver them" (Exodus 3:7–8). A modern exodus has begun, an exodus of abused and broken people out of homes that have become oppressive and violent.

Never before has such widespread attention been given to relieving the enormous suffering of women, children, and some men, at the hands of their own family members, by which women and children run the greatest risk of incest, sexual abuse, assault, physical injury, and murder.

"In search of shalom" suggests an ongoing search for wholeness in relationships. There is hope! The Old Testament declares God's will for shalom—a world at peace. The New Testament proclaims that Christ has made peace possible by breaking down the walls of hostility that separate people from God and from each other. We are called to be peacemakers in our homes in our own time—to destroy the dividing walls of hostility.

Mennonites are fortunate in that shalom teaching is woven through our theology, challenging us to become shalom persons—persons in whose lives Christ has intervened. As we search for shalom, healing for ourselves and for each other becomes actualized. I know this in my own life and with my family of origin.

I experienced abuse as a child in my home, and I know I am not the only victim of abuse in the Mennonite Church. Each time I speak about my own experience

or my ministry, Mennonite pastors relate similar stories. In my family, I was a victim of verbal, physical, and sexual abuse.

My father was excommunicated by the Mennonite Church around the time I was born. After this, my mother couldn't control my dad or bring him back into church fellowship. This greatly affected our family. As I grew up, my parents grew further and further apart. My mother's frustrations were expressed to me through severe punishment. I was a very spirited child and she needed something in her life she could control.

As Mennonites, our greatest challenge may be to admit our problems. We have an extraordinary ability to persuade ourselves that we are among the best-behaved and best-regulated people. My mother certainly got that message and proceeded to see that this spirited individual also learned it. In those days, her style of discipline was called punishment. Today, it would be seen as child abuse. In my father's rejection by the church, he turned to horses and a riding club. My mother used one of his horsewhips to punish me; my brother used my body for his pleasure.

Yet our family problems remained secret. I remember many trips to church arguing with my mother (I didn't see why I had to go if Dad didn't), but, when we got to the church door, no one could tell—or so we hoped.

These years greatly affected my early adult life and my relationship with my parents and the church. It took a long time to move away from blaming them for my problems, but I eventually realized, through treat-

**As Mennonites, our greatest challenge may be to admit our problems. We have an extraordinary ability to persuade ourselves that we are among the best-behaved and best-regulated people.**

ment, that as an adult I could take responsibility for myself, my identity, and I could move on with my life.

Today that is called moving from thinking of oneself as a victim to becoming a survivor. I am an adult survivor who has taken responsibility for her life and made peace with her parents and the church. When my mother was dying of cancer, I took care of her in my home. We were able to heal and forgive.

We Mennonites work hard at hiding our family problems. In our search for shalom—to be shalom persons—we must acknowledge that conflict exists in our families. I was taught that to be angry was to sin. We have work to do to interpret “be angry and sin not” in a helpful way, disassociating anger from violence, holding grudges, and withdrawal of love.

We can learn to assert ourselves in healthy ways when we feel anger or disagree with someone. We can teach children to assert themselves when adults, whether siblings or parents, want to touch them sexually, abuse them physically, or hurt them emotionally. This means giving our children permission to know what is inappropriate



behavior and helping them know the difference between niceness as a facade and genuine care and love.

The challenge for Christians is to learn nonviolent ways of parenting. I remember a time when I couldn't imagine parenting without spanking. Yet I knew how the whip felt to me. I often hear the questions, “When do you believe spanking is okay?” (Films and books by Dobson and LaHay, which are popular among some Christians, encourage spanking.) I ask in return, “Why are we so dead set on hitting children? Why is spanking, hitting, or beating good for children, and not for adults?”

The answer is, they are not. When does hitting become abusive? It is always abusive. Hitting children teaches them that hitting is okay. Hitting and spanking\* teach violence—abuse of the weak by the strong. ♦

\*Additionally, spanking on the buttocks stimulates the puboccoglous muscle, which supports our genitalia, and associates sexual arousal with violence and pain.

## Sex roles and injustice in the home

I grew up in a “good” Mennonite home. We had everything we needed and much that we wanted. My parents believed in those old-fashioned, traditional values, which discriminated and created injustice. For example: women belong in the home, men belong in the career world. Or: a woman is valued in life by her servanthood to her husband and to her children. Growing up, I saw how those ideas created a narrow fit-in-this-box world. I saw that males could be anything while women had limited choices. I could not fit

into that mold, so I felt the pain people endure when they are restricted or confined by their society, yet follow their *own* being (rather than someone else's idea of who they should be).

Seeing this injustice around me, I began to feel angry. I became angry at my mother for teaching me domestic skills but expecting nothing from my brothers. I became angry with her for accepting her “lot in life”—serving my father, feeling of less worth than men, “Dad is the head”—

This article is adapted from an article that first appeared in the November–December 1991 issue, *Report #99*, “Women in the child-bearing years: Sharing our stories again.” This article was printed anonymously.



**I became angry at men. In my home the males got what they wanted. In my home I was not worth as much as my brothers. They got privileges; I served.**

instead of improving it. Just recently have I begun to accept my mother and the choices she made.

I became angry at men. My anger towards them runs deeper than my anger towards my mom. I still fight this anger. I feel men are the cause of the trouble and injustice in this world. I feel this way, not only because of what I see happening in the world but also because of my experiences. In my home the males got what they wanted. In my home I was not worth as

much as my brothers. They got privileges; I served. Also, my father was not an example of love. He provided for us, but I did not see much of him. That kind of love was distant and not very comforting as I grew up. Another reason for my anger is the actuality that one of my older brothers sexually molested me.

This experience created not just anger, but empathy—empathy for sexually abused women and children and other powerless people abused by the powerful (in my thinking it is men who are the powerful, therefore the abusers).

Growing up in the Mennonite church has not helped my confidence or self-worth (I worked at that on my own), or helped me become forgiving or more positive towards men. I feel the church is steps behind society in correcting injustice and oppression. I try to fight this sin I see within the church, but the resistance makes it hard to keep fighting. Sometimes I feel like quitting the Mennonite church, but I feel I must keep trying. I must help people to see the real Jesus—the man who came to free the enslaved, the *man* who was a servant and who told Mary that she was correct to sit at his feet and listen (not to help Martha with housework). ♦

## Free human beings in Christ

by Bernie Wiebe

This article is adapted from an article that first appeared in the August 1979 issue, Report #27, "Focus on New Men/New Roles."

**W**hat did Paul mean in Galatians 3:28, “We are no longer Jew or Greeks or slaves or free men or even merely men or women, but we are all the same—we are Christians; we are one in Christ Jesus.” Was Paul suggesting an equilibrium of power, equal rights, “carbon copies” of one another?

In the women’s awareness (feminist) movement, the impression frequently has been that women want to be like men. It’s partly understandable because men are the holders of power, the aggressors, the tough ones. More recently, Christian feminists have realized that there will be little

new “female freedom” unless men also make some adjustments.

At the *New Men/New Roles* conference, about 75 men and women studied the meaning of being “new men in light of the Gospel.” The conference was co-sponsored by Canadian Women and Religion, the General Conference Mennonite Church Commission on Education, and Mennonite Central Committee (Manitoba).

Elizabeth and Perry Yoder, authors of the book *New Men/New Roles*, shared how Paul emphasizes that Christ’s death and resurrection symbolizes what happens to

women and men "in Christ." Both take on a "new creation" with new attitudes. Persons in Christ are freed from their old ways of judging; they are now on a new foundation that calls both women and men to base their "authority" on the nurturing of each other in Christ.

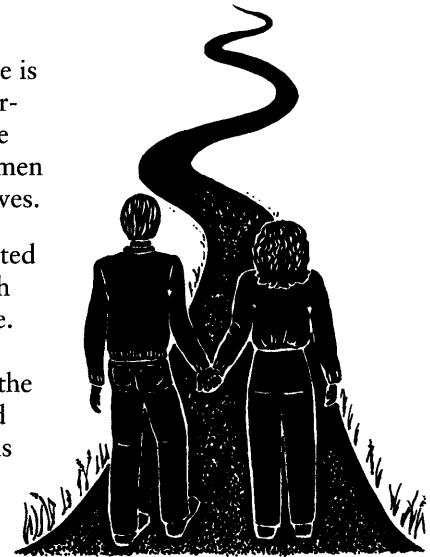
Norman Walsh, coordinator of the Canadian Friends Service Committee, led a multimedia presentation titled "Masculinity and peace," which included a slide set "Do cowboys ever become cowmen?" He showed many samples of society's combination of violence with masculine images. "Only two animal species regularly destroy their own, men and rats," he said. "In terms of today's macho-male mystique," he continues, "Jesus might easily have been declared a sissy or too feminine. But in Jesus' character model is a real hope for peace-building relationships."

George Lakey, a Quaker who co-authored the book *Moving toward a new society* and is a member of the movement for a New Society in Philadelphia, said there are perils in being "success objects," in his

address on "Masculinity and success." Today's male is never secure because he is always expected to be challenging a person ahead of him for his job. That's the only way to "succeed." It leaves most men with negative feelings towards themselves.

Lakey suggested that our male-dominated society is full of put-downs. The church offers a vision of what we could be like. But too often the church takes signals from society rather than characterizing the new ideals of the Bible. Christians need to be brave enough to live "new models in Christ," both male and female.

Probably the best justification for such a conference was expressed in one sharing session. One man reported, "I have traditionally regarded only those things important that enhance my job and my image as a man. Here I have begun to realize the significance of relating to my own family, especially sharing more intimately in the total life of my wife. It will not only make her feel better about herself; it will make me more the kind of man Jesus Christ wants me to be." ♦



**Persons in Christ are freed from their old ways of judging; they are now on a new foundation that calls both women and men to base their "authority" on the nurturing of each other in Christ.**

## Raising non-sexist sons

**W**hen approaching parenthood, I became more aware of my fears about raising sons. I grew up surrounded by sisters, the fourth child in a family of one son followed by six daughters. Female sibling culture was familiar to me, and I felt confident (however unfounded that was) about parenting a daughter. But sons—that was scary! Would the thoughtful, kind, self-aware sons I wanted to raise be able to cope in our competitive, individualist society? Would I have much support for raising this kind of son? As my sons learned to relate to a still male-dominated world, would they become distant from me?

To raise non-sexist sons, my husband, Gerald, and I decided role modeling has

to start at home, and what we do would mean more than what we say. Since we were both working full-time for 10 years of marriage before having children, we had lots of practice dividing chores at home. With the addition of parenting responsibilities and my move to part-time work, chores were negotiated again. Our roles have continued to evolve as our children's needs change. Much of our work at home is shared or rotated.

"When I'm a dad, I can cook," Logan announced to me one day recently. This unsolicited comment made me feel our modeling is bearing at least a little fruit! Some chores are claimed by one of us, by choice. I really like garage sale shopping, where I buy most of our clothes. Gerald is

**by Mary Alice Ressler**

This article is adapted from an article that first appeared in the January–February 1997 issue, *Report* #130, "Mothers and sons."



**Would the thoughtful, kind, self-aware sons I wanted to raise be able to cope in our competitive, individualist society? Would I have much support for raising this kind of son?**

an expert grocery shopper, and usually takes one of our children with him each week. When I fleetingly considered doing the grocery shopping last week, Ariel teased me; "It would take you hours, Mom. You don't know where anything is in the store!" She's right—I've been to the grocery store about five times in the last five years!

Gerald and I have tried not to sex-type our children's play choices. We encourage our sons to have tea parties and to play "dress-up," "daddy" and Playmobil families, as well as to play with such toys as building sets, balls and vehicles. When Patrick, at age 3, asked for nail polish like his sister's, we brushed it on. But when

Sunday arrived, we debated if we should remove it before we went to church. Would he be hurt by any comments people made to him? As we'd hoped, friends at church understood that Patrick enjoyed the novelty of his painted fingernails!

To counter the many stereotypical male/female roles found in popular culture, I seek out children's books, songs and movies that feature strong, courageous females and nurturing, gentle males. Just as in my own understanding and practice, stories and songs that offer some of the roles I'm looking for also have their foibles.

In our community and neighborhood, I draw the children's attention to men and women in nontraditional roles. I'm pleased when the school principal, optometrist, family doctor, athlete on TV or road worker we pass is female, so my children have experience of or personal knowledge of women in these roles. I'm also happy my children know men who are the primary caregivers for their children, see other dads cooking and cleaning up after dinner, and are cared for at times by our male friends.

The influences on our sons are many, and it still seems a formidable task to raise non-sexist sons. I am often not the parent I want to be, in this area and others. But I am hopeful, especially with the support of our church family and like-minded friends and their children, that our sons will value and relate to girls and women as people who are equally created and gifted by God.♦

# Singleness: Living in the paradox

by Margaret Hunsberger

This article is adapted from an article that first appeared in the March–April 1994 issue, *Report #113, "And singles bring pickles."*

**W**hen I tried to figure out why I was having so much trouble settling down to write about life without a partner, I realized that it was more than reluctance to submit to the discipline of writing. Two factors arise: this is personal territory in which I normally keep my thoughts to myself; and it's a subject

about which I don't quite know what to say, because for me it's full of ambivalence and paradox.

Singleness is liberating. I'm free to make my own choices and pursue my career. When someone suddenly suggests going out for dinner or extending a work meeting, I don't have to pick up children from

somewhere, phone home or go into lengthy explanation about family demands.

Singleness is limiting. Some activities, such as movies, are within my comfort zone to do alone, but others—from concerts to rodeos—aren’t. Sharing the event is as important as attending it. I don’t mind going to church alone because my congregation values individuals, but churches with a strong family emphasis might pose a concern.

Singleness is lonely. The absence of emotional and physical intimacy is a reality of my life. There is no one to help shake off the day’s tensions with a good laugh, or to put trivial irritations into perspective. By necessity, I’m pushed to keep my own sense of perspective without relying on others—maybe a good thing, but it doesn’t necessarily feel that way. There are times when all I want and/or need is a hug . . . and yet I think it’s easy for women alone to romanticize the intimacy we imagine others to have. In reality, I suspect, loneliness is just a fact of life.

Singleness has solitude. For me, that’s a form of bliss. After a demanding day at work, I love to come home where I can possess my soul in silence, lose myself in a book, enjoy my flowers, turn music on or off—that’s relief, relaxation, respite.

Singleness has stability. Things stay where I put them. They’re lost if I lose them. They get done only if I do them. No one comes home and suddenly announces anything—desirable or traumatic.

Singleness means dealing with doubt. Decisions are difficult to make, and I often wish there was someone to help make them. Even with the empathetic ear and good advice of a friend, it’s still my decision, my risk and my consequences. No one is in it with me.

Singleness involves a potentially poor future. Three-quarters of the elderly poor in Canada are women alone. Of course, not all are never-married; some are single because of divorce or widowhood. What happens when one grows old?

Singleness is poor in status. Any respect granted to a woman alone is hard earned. While significant gains in women’s rights have been made in recent years, the social structure is still biased toward couples, and men still hold most of the marbles. Most married women I know have a lifestyle, possessions and a home they could not afford on their own. The positive side of this for single women is that it forces us to think more about stewardship and be less susceptible to creeping materialism.

Singleness is rich in friendships, an area where I am really blessed. In a society that emphasizes sexual relationships and gives little attention to friendship, I have learned what a delight friendship is, and what a treasure my friends are. Some of these friends are single and some are married. Some are wives and some are husbands. They enrich my life immeasurably in innumerable ways.

As I write this, it’s a glorious autumn afternoon. And I’m going for a walk. By myself.♦

**Singleness has solitude.**  
**After a demanding day at work, I love to come home where I can possess my soul in silence, lose myself in a book, enjoy my flowers, turn music on or off—that’s relief, relaxation, respite.**



# Who killed woman's gift?\*

by Ruth Brunk Stoltzfus

This poem first appeared in the January–February 1980 issue, *Report* #29, "Women in the speaking ministry of the church."

Who killed woman's gift?

"I," said the man of terror  
With his mix of truth and error.  
"I'd rather not hear the word of truth  
than to hear it from a Jane or Ruth.  
I killed woman's gift."

Who saw her gift die?

"I," said the woman who only knits.  
"These ministering women give me fits.  
Why can't all women be of the same mold  
and just look out the window  
when they are old?  
I saw her gift die."

Who'll be chief mourner?

"I," said the freeing man  
"I never favored the put-down and ban.  
Women should not wait till they're 63  
to see if the church will set them free.  
I'll be chief mourner."

\*With apologies to Mother Goose and Cock Robin.



# The prophetic voice in the Bible

by Wilma Ann Bailey

This article is adapted from an article that first appeared in the May–June 2000 issue, *Report* #150, "Whatever happened to the prophetic voice?"

A prophet does not speak for herself. She speaks in the name of the Divine. In the Bible, prophetic pronouncements usually, though not always, consist of a description of the current situation, a statement known in scholarly circles as the messenger formula ("Thus says the Lord"), and a statement of what the outcome will be. The message of the prophet was to the people of her time, not the distant future.

Not all prophets were called to a life-long vocation as prophet. Some, such as Amos, were called in the midst of another vocation to speak God's word (Amos 7:14). The life of the prophet was not a happy one because usually the messages she or he had to convey challenged the existing status quo and prevailing ideologies, thereby inviting ridicule and ostracism. Although Isaiah volunteered for the job (Isaiah 6:8), most would have preferred to let someone else do it (Jeremiah 20:7–12).

Though muted, the prophetic voice of women is heard in the Bible. A number of women—Miriam (Exodus 15:20), Deborah (Judges 4:4), Huldah (2 Kings 22:14), Noadiah (Nehemiah 6:14), Anna (Luke 2:36), and Isaiah's wife (Isaiah 8:3)—are specifically identified as prophets in the biblical text itself. A woman named Jezebel was said to have called herself a prophet in Revelation 2:20. (See also Ezekiel 13:17). Moreover, the book of Acts indicates that the four daughters of Philip prophesied (Acts 21:9). We know they were not alone.

The prophet Joel, for example, envisions a day when normalcy is restored and both sons and daughters will prophesy (Joel 2:28). According to the author of Acts, that day arrived with the pouring out of the Holy Spirit on the first Pentecost (Acts 2:17). Paul also assumes that women function in a prophetic role in the church (1 Corinthians 11:5). The best remembered words of prophecy uttered by a woman, however, emerge from the mouth of one who is not called a prophet at all—Hannah, the mother of Samuel.

Hannah delivered her prophecy in the form of a prayer upon the birth of her firstborn son. This prayer was probably the model for the praise song uttered by Mary on the birth of her firstborn son (Luke 1:46-55). After a long period of childlessness, Hannah rejoiced because she had become the mother of a son. She recognized that this was a special child who would play a significant role in the life of the Israelite people. Hannah envisioned a time of upheaval in the social structures of her day, resulting in empowerment of the poor and needy, and divestiture of power from the rich and high born: "The bows of the mighty are broken, but the feeble gird on strength. Those who are full have hired themselves out for bread, but those who were hungry are fat with spoil. The barren has borne seven, but she who has many children is forlorn" (1 Samuel 2:4-5).

Although many try to personalize this prophetic poem and limit it to the occasion of the birth of a child, the use of marital language and references to the social structure indicate that Hannah is referring to more than her specific situation. New

Testament scholar, Cain Hope Felder, writes that when Mary appropriated Hannah's song and molded it into her own, she became "a paradigm for the socially concerned female." That Hannah and Mary were not just expressing their own words but conveying a message from God can be seen in the fact that their words are quite consistent in theme and content with those of the great Israelite prophets, Isaiah and Amos.

Although only a very few words of the female prophets have been preserved, we know there were female prophets and they did speak. Like their male counterparts, they perhaps were not always heard, but someone thought the memory of these women and what they had to say was worth recording. Hence they are part of the biblical record today. ♦

**The life of the prophet was not a happy one because usually the messages she or he had to convey challenged the existing status quo and prevailing ideologies, thereby inviting ridicule and ostracism.**



# The loss of the feminine in church leadership

by Paul Shaheen

This article is adapted from an article that first appeared in the January–February 1993 issue, Report #106, "Good news for men."

**The saddest thing now is what used to be the happiest thing: I am not alone. I know a lot of Christian men like myself, who have suffered from one-dimensional Christian leadership. When God made us, it was a two-dimensional creation, male and female.**

**W**hen I first became a Christian in 1971, I was part of a college-age revival that followed on the heels of an evangelistic crusade at Kent State University. I spent the summer with a group of about 20 people, and we grew in our faith together.

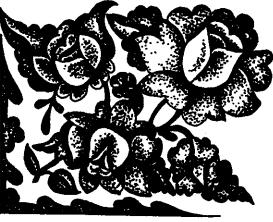
The group had no official leaders, but two people emerged. One was Chuck, who later became pastor of a large church in the area. The other mentor was Kathy. Kathy ministered to our group in prayer, in scripture teaching, and in emotional healing (which had not at that time become a subcategory of religious literature).

In the two years that followed that first summer, I worked with Campus Crusade for Christ (a campus evangelical student movement) at a large urban university. One of the Crusade staff members, Evie, was very discerning of the personal needs of many students, and always had a creative, loving talent for bringing women to faith in Jesus Christ. She advised me at the time that I needed to learn to love myself, to see how God loved me, something I am hearing again now from counselors after 20 years of struggle.

Many of the men with whom I searched the scriptures are now pastors, priests and ministers. To my knowledge, none of the women are. Yet the women I have just described had something unique and beautiful to offer. As a result of my experiences with Kathy and Evie, I continue to miss a feminine presence in church leadership. I wonder if I would be more in touch with my emotions, more socially confident (and less lonely) if Kathy or Evie had had the same opportunities that Chuck had. Would I be gnashing my teeth when my critical-thinking acquaintances criticize the church's sexism and lack of emotional balance?

The saddest thing now is what used to be the happiest thing: I am not alone. I know a lot of Christian men like myself, who have suffered from one-dimensional Christian leadership. When God made us, it was a two-dimensional creation, male and female. If out of Adam, God made Eve, I find it hard to believe that the substance of Eve, taken from Adam, could be inferior for ministry, which ultimately *must* involve the *whole* church. I miss Kathy and Evie, it's true, but I miss also the many women like them who will never have access to the means to prove that they are competent to counsel and teach. And how much poorer will we all be because of that? ♦





# Teaching children in their language

I was born in Nuevo León, Mexico. I come from a rancho on the outskirts of town where there was little or no access to electricity, running water, and much less a church; although things have changed since then and we now have Catholic churches in strategically located ranchos. Since our trips into town were scarce—about once a month—we would hardly go to church. It was not until I was about five or six years old, after my family migrated to California, that I recall being in a church. I have memories of Dad taking us to the local Catholic church, but not knowing the schedule for mass, we sometimes went when the church was closed so we would pray in the parking lot. After about a year of being in California, my father agreed to visit El Buen Pastor, Hermanos Menonita (The Good Shepherd, Mennonite Brethren) with my uncle (my grandfather's first cousin). It was at that Spanish speaking Mennonite Brethren church where I began learning more about the Word of God.

Although the preaching and singing were done in Spanish, our Sunday school classes were taught in English. I remember my first Bible being an illustrated children's Bible in English. I thought nothing of it. We spoke Spanish at home and in church but English at school and in Sunday school and that made perfect sense to me. The books of the Bible and verses were all memorized in English, just like the alphabet and children's rhymes we were learning in school.

It was not until my early years in high school that things began to change. In high school, I became more aware of who I was as a Mexican. Before then I took it for granted since most everyone around me looked like me and talked like me. It soon began to bother me when others made malicious remarks about my race or when other Mexicans denied who they

were and where they came from. Since others looked up to me, I thought to myself, what could I do to influence others to have a better attitude toward Mexicans? It was then that I actively sought to become more aware of the beauty of my Mexican heritage; I began to see it as a blessing from God. By seeing me embrace my cultural heritage and still excel academically, socially, etc., maybe others would not be ashamed of who they were. But, where would I start, what would I do?

I began by reading the Bible in Spanish. Every night I would get my father's Bible and read a chapter. From Genesis to Revelation, my eyes were opened to a brand new reality. My heart was touched and I felt something that I had never felt before in reading Scripture. I loved the Spanish language and thanked God for allowing me the privilege to feel what I felt when I read in my first language.

I am now a Sunday school teacher, and things have changed in my church. I teach the majority of my class in Spanish and the children read everything in Spanish. I am excited both when they progress in their understanding and in their reading. There are several reasons why I choose to teach the children in Spanish. One reason is because I want the children to be able to follow along during the worship service. The second reason is because I want to prepare them for when they go into the adult Sunday school class. As they grow, I want them to be able to communicate with the adults of the church, most of whom do not speak English. I also want them to feel like they will be able to contribute to the future growth of our church. The third reason is because I feel this period in their psychological development is very important, and reinforcing their Spanish language skills will only help develop a positive perception of their own culture. This in turn results in a stronger sense of self-worth. The fourth reason why I teach and have them read the Bible

by Maribel Ramírez

This article is adapted from an article that first appeared in the September–October 2000 issue, *Report #152*, "The implications of translation."

**I began by reading the Bible in Spanish. My heart was touched and I felt something that I had never felt before in reading Scripture. I loved the Spanish language and thanked God for allowing me the privilege to feel what I felt when I read in my first language.**



in Spanish is because I do not want them to forget who they are and who God made them to be as Mexicans. Teaching children, especially Mexican children, to take pride in their ethnic heritage will help them appreciate their history and give them a clearer picture of the world. In a culture full of prejudice and racism, children need to understand that God made each one of us special in his eyes. The fifth

reason is because of a study I read that said that children who know how to read and write in Spanish could learn to read and understand English faster because many of the words are derived from Latin, to which Spanish is similar. Because of these reasons, I feel that speaking, reading, and writing in Spanish will benefit the children's future. ♦

## Our God-talk: Images, idols, metaphors and masks

by Lydia Harder

This article is adapted from the compiler's comments that first appeared in the January–February, 1988 issue, *Report* #76, "Our God-talk: Images, idols, metaphors and masks."

**D**uring my college days I read a small book entitled *Your God is Too Small* by J. B. Phillips. The author urges his readers to discover a God "big" enough to meet the challenges and questions of the real world. Phillips was convinced that many people carry inadequate conceptions of God, images that are not only irrelevant to their lives, but that also prevent them from glimpsing the true God.

With this issue of *Women's Concerns Report* we want to open the discussion about the language that we use to name and characterize God. By using the words "idols" and "masks" in our title we are acknowledging the risk and danger involved in any imaging of God. At the same time we want to express our relationship to God in words that honestly communicate our personal experience: "images" and "metaphors" are necessary for us to do this.

In my readings and reflections on this theme over the past months several key ideas emerged again and again:

1. *All language about God is limited and inadequate to describe God.*

The Hebrew people, well aware that God was beyond speech, were reluctant to speak God's name. Stories, metaphors, and various substitute names were used instead of the name YHWH to describe their rela-

tionship with God and still preserve the sense of holiness and transcendence. God could be characterized as the God of war as well as the God of peace, the God who never changes and the God who repents. They sang praises to God as the stable rock of our salvation as well as extolled the dynamic vitality of God as a spring of living water. Jesus was both the Lion of Judah and the Lamb that was slain.

The paradoxes and contradictions in the biblical picture of God push us beyond easy creeds and images fixed in stone to dynamic, fluid images which more fully encompass the ways God relates to us.

Traditional Mennonite theology and worship faces a particular problem in this regard. In its fear of idolatry and reaction to the elaborate and symbolic worship of the high church traditions, it has rejected the use of physical imagery such as sculpture, painting and architecture. Instead it has stressed simple, straightforward, literal language about God. But in this literalness, the distance between image and reality is sometimes forgotten. By using only one or two words and images for God it easily can be assumed that God already is known fully by us. Our view of God becomes static and narrow.

We need to learn again that at the root of our inability to speak adequately about God lies God's transcendence and mys-



ter. An emphasis on neglected biblical images can raise our consciousness to see how we have limited God. Creative efforts to express our relationship to God make us aware of how dependent we are on the thought patterns of our particular culture. Yet all our stumbling and awkward attempts to describe God can only testify to a God who continues to resist our attempts at classification, one who even now says to us "I am who I am." (Exodus 3:14)

*2. Our basic picture of God is formed very early in life in a complex interaction between a conscious and unconscious response to life's experiences as well as to the formal teaching we receive.*

This week as I sorted old papers while spring cleaning I discovered a picture drawn by my daughter at the age of 5. Entitled "My Family," it showed mom, dad and brothers in rather typical fashion for a child of that age. What caught my eye was the picture of a similar, much larger person hovering over the others with arms outstretched. For Kristen this person was as real as the others. She named that person God.



Psychology is teaching us that how we experience ourselves in relationship to God is related to how we experience ourselves in relationship to the world and to other people. Sandra Schneiders in her book about women's spirituality and the gender of God, *Women and The Word* (York: Paulist Press 1986), points out that just as our self-concept may be healthy or

unhealthy so too our God-image may be unhealthy and need healing.

The therapy needed is not just a rational reconception of God but a "therapy of the religious imagination." Story, poetry, art and music appeal to our emotions and can reach the unconscious level of our beings. An integrated approach involving intellect, will and feeling can bring healing to incomplete God-images. It is important therefore to bring our subconscious image to the surface so that we can allow God to cleanse and redeem that part of ourselves. We must expect our images to change and grow as we relate more deeply to God.

*3. The truth of our words about God must be tested by the way we use the words in actual situations.*

In a recent discussion with a woman who was rejected as a ministry candidate expressly because she was a woman, I was struck by the pain in her voice as she said, "I feel like the God who called me into service is a very different God from the God of the ministerial committee."

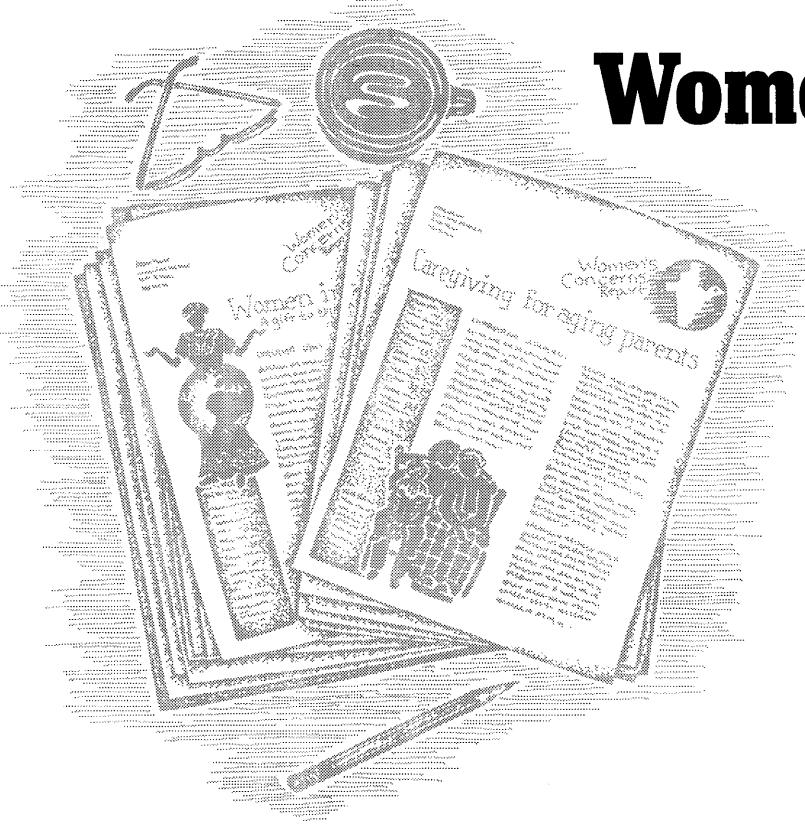
The decision had been justified by appeal to a God who determines persons of one sex to be leaders and those of another sex to be obedient followers. It made me realize again how the metaphors and images we use for God can be used either to bring salvific experiences for persons or to defend situations of oppression.

It is no surprise that the people who are calling for a new look at our God-imagery are persons who have been oppressed by Christian people and nations. Black people are rejecting a white god who condones slavery and apartheid. South American people are resisting obedience to a North American god who allows exploitation of the poor. Women are questioning a male god who calls forth structures that deny full personhood to women and justify patriarchal power of men over women.

Jesus' words, "You shall know them by their fruits," (Matthew 7:16) can be a guide to testing our God-images. What actions, feelings and commitments do our images call forth? Legitimizing unjust social orders as God's will brings into question whether we have adequately understood God. ♦

**The Hebrew people, well aware that God was beyond speech, were reluctant to speak God's name.**

**By using only one or two words and images for God it easily can be assumed that God already is known fully by us. Our view of God becomes static and narrow.**



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16. Sep 77: Rape
17. Nov 77: Third World women
18. Feb 78: The auxiliary syndrome
19. Apr–May 78: Women in ministry

20. Jun–Jul 78: Black women and the church
21. Aug–Sep 78: Women and careers
22. Oct–Nov 78: Women and World Conference
23. Dec 78: Family violence, part 1
24. Jan 79: Family violence, part 2
25. Mar–Apr 79: Women and power
26. Jul 79: Native Americans
27. Aug 79: New men, new roles
28. Nov–Dec 79: The child
29. Jan–Feb 80: Women in the speaking ministry of the church
30. Mar–Apr 80: Returned missionary women
31. May–Jun 80: Mennonite women and depression
32. Jul–Aug 80: Follow up focus on Native Americans/Canadians
33. Sep–Oct 80: Women in leadership
34. Nov–Dec 80: Women in Mennonite business/industry
35. Jan–Feb 81: Women and militarism
36. Mar–Apr 81: Mentoring for and by women
37. May–Jun 81: Ministry of writing
38. Jul–Aug 81: Minister's spouse
39. Sep–Oct 81: Discipleship motives in career choices
40. Nov–Dec 81: Focus on singleness and single parenting
41. Jan–Feb 82: Women and health
42. Mar–Apr 82: Language: Inclusiveness
43. May–Jun 82: Ordination
44. Jul–Aug 82: Sexuality and God's Kingdom
45. Sep–Oct 82: Peace and the power of one woman
46. Nov–Dec 82: Two-career marriages
47. Feb 83: Nurturing children: feminist roots—what nurtures their growth?
48. Mar–Apr 83: Women mystics and the devotional life
49. May–Jun 83: Women and the Word: The interpretive intrigue
50. Jul–Aug 83: Ten-year celebration of CWC
51. Sep–Oct 83: Women's experiences in nontraditional Mennonite churches
52. Nov–Dec 83: Women and aging
53. Jan–Feb 84: Mennonite women and home mission

## Women in church leadership

54. Mar–Apr 84: Third World women  
55. May–Jun 84: Childbearing/childlessness  
56. Jul–Aug 84: Friendship and community  
57. Sep–Oct 84: Women and poverty  
58. Nov–Dec 84: Women and body image  
59. Jan–Feb 85: Black women and feminism  
60. Mar–Apr 85: Women and the special child  
61. May–Jun 85: Women's development:  
A critique of existing theory  
62. Jul–Aug 85: Mothers and daughters  
63. Sep–Oct 85: Women and decision-making in  
Mennonite institutions  
64. Jan–Feb 86: Women, pornography and violence  
65. Mar–Apr 86: Women, men and housework  
66. May–Jun 86: Divorce and the church  
67. Jul–Aug 86: Women, choice and lifestyle  
68. Sep–Oct 86: Women resisting injustice  
69. Nov–Dec 86: Women and advertising  
70. Jan–Feb 87: Sharing our stories (social roles  
& sexuality)  
71. Mar–Apr 87: Women and counseling  
72. May–Jun 87: Asian women doing theology  
73. Jul–Aug 87: Widowhood  
74. Sep–Oct 87: Wife abuse  
75. Nov–Dec 87: Mennonite women artists  
76. Jan–Feb 88: Our God-talk: Images, idols,  
metaphors & masks  
77. Mar–Apr 88: Farm women in crisis  
78. May–Jun 88: Palestinian women  
79. Jul–Aug 88: Women as domestic help  
80. Sep–Oct 88: Women with disabilities  
81. Nov–Dec 88: Mennonite women leaders  
'round the world  
82. Jan–Feb 89: Mennonite women leaders  
'round the world, part 2  
83. Mar–Apr 89: Incest  
84. May–Jun 89: Shelter, housing, homelessness  
85. Jul–Aug 89: Cancer  
86. Sep–Oct 89: Sex tourism and prostitution  
87. Nov–Dec 89: Women around the world:  
What are their options?  
88. Jan–Feb 90: Aging  
89. Mar–Apr 90: Women: Bearing the cross of  
discipleship  
90. May–Jun 90: Women of South Africa  
91. Jul–Aug 90: Co-dependency  
92. Sep–Oct 90: Women, environment & a throw-  
away society  
93. Nov–Dec 90: Motherhood, careers and  
spirituality  
94. Jan–Feb 91: Mental illness  
95. Mar–Apr 91: Drugs and alcohol  
96. May–Jun 91: The seduction of materialism  
97. Jul–Aug 91: Literacy  
98. Sep–Oct 91: Shopping cart power  
99. Nov–Dec 91: The childbearing years  
100. Jan–Feb 92: Parenting in a cross-cultural  
setting  
101. Mar–Apr 92: Women and healthy sexuality  
102. May–Jun 92: Women struggling in the church  
103. Jul–Aug 92: Native women  
104. Sep–Oct 92: Women and the international debt  
105. Nov–Dec 92: Women Doing Theology:  
Conference report  
106. Jan–Feb 93: Good news for men  
107. Mar–Apr 93: Women and dress  
108. May–Jun 93: Women in church colleges  
109. Jul–Aug 93: 20th anniversary issue  
110. Sep–Oct 93: Step- and single-parent families  
111. Nov–Dec 93: Women's groups in Central  
America  
112. Jan–Feb 94: Pastoral and professional  
misconduct  
113. Mar–Apr 94: Single women  
114. May–Jun 94: Women in pastoral ministries  
115. Jul–Aug 94: Women in helping professions  
116. Sep–Oct 94: Women and CPS  
117. Nov–dec 94: Abortion  
118. Jan–Feb 95: Mennonite women in business  
119. Mar–Apr 95: First generation Mennonite  
women  
120. May–Jun 95: Women and Islam  
121. Jul–Aug 95: Women and theology  
122. Sep–Oct 95: Women and poverty  
123. Nov–Dec 95: Friendship  
124. Jan–Feb 96: Quiet in the Land:  
Conference report  
125. Mar–Apr 96: Women and AIDS  
126. May–Jun 96: Embracing change:  
Women in midlife  
127. Jul–Aug 96: Women and Mennonite worship  
128. Sep–Oct 96: Voices of young Mennonite  
women  
129. Nov–Dec 96: Infertility  
130. Jan–Feb 97: Mothers and sons  
131. Mar–Apr 97: Women and books  
132. May–Jun 97: Eating disorders  
133. Jul–Aug 97: Hispanic Anabaptist women's  
stories (Bilingual—Spanish/English)  
134. Sep–Oct 97: Older women  
135. Nov–Dec 97: Redefining, renaming &  
reclaiming symbols  
136. Jan–Feb 98: Learning to laugh

**Nancy Brubaker Bauman**  
became intentional interim  
pastor at Mannheim Mennonite  
Church, Petersburg, Ontario in  
September, 2004.

**Jayne Byler** serves as pastor  
at First Mennonite Church,  
Sugar Creek, Ohio.

**Sharon Dirks** became the assis-  
tant to the pastor (her husband,  
Rudy Dirks) in February 2004  
at Niagara United Mennonite  
Church, Niagara-on-the-Lake,  
Ontario.

**Eleanor Epp-Stobbe** became  
pastor at Erb St. Mennonite  
Church, Waterloo, Ontario in  
October, 2004.

**Kathy Giesbrecht** has served  
as part-time associate pastor  
at Winnipeg Chinese Mennonite  
Church, Winnipeg, Manitoba  
since November, 2003.

**Elsie Gonsman** was  
licensed toward ordination  
as pastor at Roaring Spring  
Mennonite Church, Claysburg,  
Pennsylvania.

## **Women in church leadership**

continued

**Elsa Littman** was ordained in Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference and serves as a Resource Chaplain at LaPorte Hospital, LaPorte, Indiana.

**Myrna Miller** became pastor at Steinmann Mennonite Church, Baden, Ontario in August, 2004.

**Marilyn Rudy-Froese** began serving as associate pastor at Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church, Kitchener, Ontario, in September, 2004.

**Emily Schaming** became youth pastor at Ottawa Mennonite Church in August, 2004.

**Vicki Yoder** was ordained in Ohio Mennonite Conference and serves as a chaplain/pastoral counselor.

**Lidia Zehr** was licensed toward ordination as pastor at Crystal Springs Mennonite Church, Harper, Kansas.

137. Mar–Apr 98: Women doing peacemaking
138. May–Jun 98: Women educating children
139. Jul–Aug 98: Lesbians in the church: Experience & response
140. Sep–Oct 98: Women and spiritual direction
141. Nov–Dec 98: Women in ministry: Progress and backlash
142. Jan–Feb 99: Spirituality through the arts
143. Mar–Apr 99: Women and mentors
144. May–Jun 99: Women working for justice
145. Jul–Aug 99: Women's journey through grief
146. Sep–Oct 99: Kaleidoscopes: Women juggling the fragments
147. Nov–Dec 99: Forgiveness: Stories of redemption & healing
148. Jan–Feb 00: Mennonite women in India
149. Mar–Apr 00: Cross-cultural counseling
150. May–Jun 00: Whatever happened to the prophetic voice?
151. Jul–Aug 00: Women and ritual
152. Nov–Dec 00: The implications of translation
153. Jan–Feb 01: How the Bible is vital to feminist women of faith: Responses through the years
154. Mar–Apr 01: Navigating the complex world of dating and mating
155. May–Jun 01: Women, war and rape
156. July–Aug 01: Image of God, image of self
157. Sep–Oct 01: Domestic abuse: A concern for all (Bilingual—Spanish/English)
158. Nov–Dec 01: Women, children and homelessness
159. Jan–Feb 02: Women in Zimbabwe
160. Mar–Apr 02: Caregiving for aging parents
161. May–June 02: Barriers to women in leadership
162. July–Aug 02: Women and AIDS
163. Sep–Oct 02: Women who have left the church
164. Nov–Dec 02: Anabaptist theology opposing violence against women
165. Jan–Feb 03: Looking Back: Women's Concerns directors reflect
166. Mar–Apr 03: Abuse prevention and recovery: History of MCC's work
167. May–Jun 03: Women in Colombia (Bilingual—Spanish/English)
168. Jul–Aug 03: Women's changing roles
169. Sep–Oct 03: Theology and gender
170. Nov–Dec 03: Looking forward
171. Jan–Feb 04: Gifts of the Red Tent: Women creating
172. Mar–Apr 04: Women and immigration (Bilingual—Spanish/English)
173. May–Jun 04: Men's changing roles
174. Jul–Aug 04: Women and education
175. Sep–Oct 04: Women pastors
176. Nov–Dec 04: Celebrating *Report*



All issues are available from MCC U.S. Women's Concerns for \$3 Cdn/\$2 U.S. per copy. To order, write to MCC, P.O. Box 500, Akron PA 17501-0500, email: [lpq@mcc.org](mailto:lpq@mcc.org) or call (888) 563-4676 in the U.S. or (717) 859-1151.



**Scholarships awarded.** The Women in Leadership Subcommittee (WILS) of Lancaster Mennonite Conference has awarded six Quiet Shouts Seminary Scholarships (for a total of \$5000) for the 2004–2005 academic year. This scholarship supports Lancaster Conference Mennonite women pursuing pastoral studies towards a Masters degree at an accredited seminary. The scholarship is made available through

donations from individuals and from the royalties of the book *Quiet Shouts*, authored by Louise Stoltzfus (a former *Women's Concerns Report* editor who died in November 2002). The women who were awarded scholarships are: Theda Good, Harrisonburg, Virginia, who is pursuing a Masters of Divinity degree at Eastern Mennonite Seminary; Karen Sensenig, Ephrata, Pennsylvania,

who is studying towards a Master of Divinity degree at Lancaster Theological Seminary; Andrea Lengacher, Harrisonburg, Virginia, who is working towards a Master of Divinity degree at Eastern Mennonite Seminary; Linda Witmer, Lancaster, Pennsylvania, who begins studies towards a Master of Arts degree at Lancaster Theological Seminary; and Lynn S. Parks, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, who is pursuing a Masters of Divinity in Practical Theology degree at Regent University. Donations are welcome towards this scholarship fund and can be mailed to Quiet Shouts Seminary Scholarship Fund, The Mennonite Foundation, 201 E. Oregon Rd., Suite 103, Lititz, Pa. 17543; make checks payable to "The Mennonite Foundation" and designate it for "Quiet Shouts Seminary Scholarship Fund." For more information about WILS or the scholarship, contact Carol Oberholtzer at 717-626-9361.

**Women in Ministry and Leadership retreat.** This event, planned by Brethren in Christ women, is open to women in ministry and leadership from any denomination. The retreat will be held at Kenbrook Bible Camp, Lebanon, Pennsylvania, on March 14–16, 2005. The theme will be "Celebrating our stories." Speakers will include Anne Marie Griffith, Malia Meiser, and Brenda Wagner. In addition, there will be nine workshops, special times of worship, sharing, prayer, and Holy Communion. For more information or to request a

brochure, go to [www.equalworth.net/](http://www.equalworth.net/) ministry or contact Rev. Janet M. Peifer at 717-259-5404; [revjmp@equalworth.net](mailto:revjmp@equalworth.net); or 156 Lake Meade Dr., East Berlin, PA 17316.

#### **Damascus and Beyond: Seeking Clearer**

**Sight and Bolder Spirit.** This conference, to be held March 11–13, 2005 in Atlanta, Georgia, will celebrate the Damascus Road Anti-Racism Program's 10 years of educating and organizing within the church, and will envision future directions for anti-racism work. For more information, contact Phil Brubaker at 574-246-0812 or [pkb@mcc.org](mailto:pkb@mcc.org).

**EEWC Update.** This is the quarterly, 16-page newsletter of the Evangelical and Ecumenical Women's Caucus. Though evangelical in its roots, EEWC has embraced feminists from all Christian bodies and also dialogues with those of different faiths. This newsletter is similar to the *Women's Concerns Report*, although each issue is not usually focused on a single topic. Thoughtful reviews of current books are a special strength. To subscribe, contact Evangelical and Ecumenical Women's Caucus, P.O. Box 67, Davis, IL 61019-0067. Membership costs \$35 and a subscription without membership is \$18. For a free sample copy, email: [office@eewc.org](mailto:office@eewc.org) or phone: 815-248-2137.

*Recommended by Reta Halteman Finger, Professor, Messiah College and regular contributor to EEWC Update. ♦*

**World AIDS Day.** Since 1988, December 1 has been observed as World AIDS day. This year, the theme is *Women, Girls, HIV and AIDS*, recognizing that women and girls are increasingly vulnerable to HIV infection and often bear increased care-giving responsibilities when family members are infected. The MCC Generations at Risk project, in collaboration with the MCC U.S. Women's Concerns Desk, has prepared worship and informational resources which groups can use in honoring this day. For more information see: [www.mcc.org/aids/resources](http://www.mcc.org/aids/resources) or contact your nearest MCC office.

**Women's Ordination Worldwide International Conference 2005.** "Breaking Silence, Breaking Bread: Christ calls women to lead" is the theme of the second Women's Ordination Worldwide (WOW) international ecumenical conference, which will be held July 22–24, 2005 at Carleton University, Ottawa, Ontario. One of the key speakers will be Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, renowned professor of New Testament and Theology at Harvard University. The vision of WOW includes all Christian denominations in every part of the globe, and membership is open to all groups which work for the overall





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## WOMEN'S CONCERN

### Looking Forward

Additional resources  
on the Web site:  
[www.mcc.org/  
us/womensconcerns](http://www.mcc.org/us/womensconcerns)

◆  
New peace-and-justice  
publication

◆  
Anti-sexism resources

goals of WOW. For more information, visit [www.womenpriests.org/interact/ottawa.htm](http://www.womenpriests.org/interact/ottawa.htm) or [members.rogers.com/virginialafond/WOW2005/](http://members.rogers.com/virginialafond/WOW2005/).

**Women's conference in Ukraine helps churches deal with depression.** In Ukraine, depression has often been denounced as a sin by church teachings. MCC and Evangelical Christian Baptist (ECB) churches organized a women's conference on issues of emotional well-being in June 2004 in the city of Zaporozhye. The conference dealt with depression, conflict and related issues as problems for the church to recognize and respond to with compassion. "These are very important issues for Christians to talk about openly," said Lyuda Zolotaryov, an MCC peace worker and an ECB church member. Zolotaryov wove academic understanding and biblical teaching into a presentation at the conference. "It was

especially good for the pastors' or deacons' wives to see that it's OK for church people to come to them for help—and that they don't need to judge others' problems but rather to help them," she said. *MCC News Service, August 20, 2004.*

**MCC's Global Family Program.** In the heart of Damascus' Old City in Syria is a l'Arche community (Safina) for adults with mental handicaps. With the help of Global Family funds, Safina is able to run a workshop whereby ten people with handicaps learn elemental skills and coordination, as well as basic hygiene and social skills. MCC's Global Family Program is a program of sponsorship of children, families, communities, and education. For more information, visit the Web site at [www.mcc.org/globalfamily](http://www.mcc.org/globalfamily); or call toll free in Canada 888-622-6337 and in the United States 888-563-4676. ♦